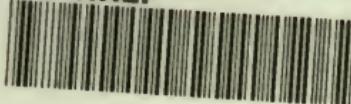


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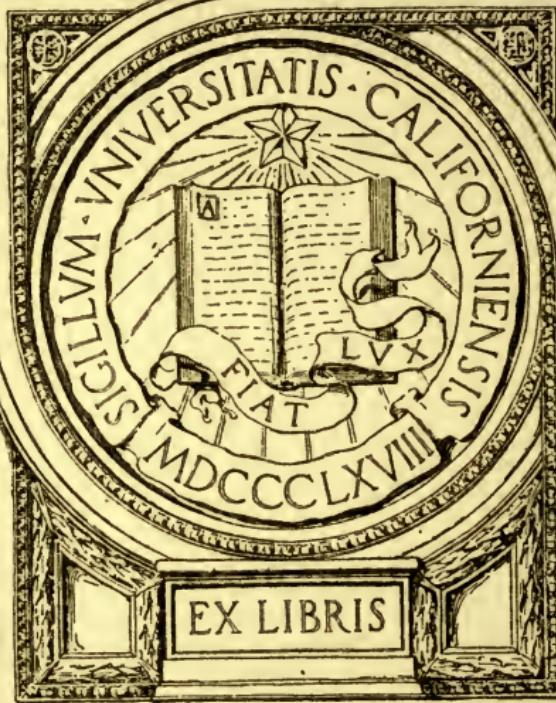
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AN AGE OF REASON

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By F. P. MANN, M. D.

MAIN

Wake! and behold the coming of the dawn,
That ushers in the all-auspicious morn,
The day of culture and the age of thought,
When what opposes reason shall be naught.
As when the lion, issuing from his lair,
Snuffs the fresh fragrance of the dewy air,
Lifts his head proudly, shakes his flowing mane,
Feels himself monarch of the wood and plain;
So man unshackled, freed from slavish pelf,
Shall learn to think and reason for himself;
Shall draw from nature, and from nature's laws,
Her closest secrets, and their hidden cause.
All hail! Supernal reason; Godlike gift;
Thou art enthroned in man, and thou dost lift
Poor groveling mortals, clinging to a clod,
Up to the contemplation of a genuine God,

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Worthy an age of reason and the hour;
No fancied person, but almighty power;
No given shape, no pictured human form,
The moving force that rides upon the storm;
Force that controls an atom or a world,
As when from chaos molecules were hurled
By force of gravitation once begun;
Moved toward a central point to form a sun,
The giant mass rolls round with mighty surge,
Vast rings are formed, break up, and planets urge
Through space; Creative power, centered in the sun,
Evolves a planetary system, thus begun.
Matter and Force; here man must pause,
Veiled by eternity,—The First Great Cause.
Here human wisdom bows before the throne,
Dumb in the presence of the Great Unknown;
Advancing Science, holding in his hand
The torch of knowledge, takes a bolder stand,
Poises the wondrous tube, explores the star,
And by the light that shines from worlds afar,
Defines the distance down the mighty slope,
Divides the trembling waves with spectroscope,
And from each ray of light draws forth the fact
That worlds are formed by no Creative act;
That everything, from molecule to man,

Follows fixed laws, not arbitrary plan.
Nature's eternal order, revolution,
Points out the method—silent evolution.
Go read the lesson in earth's hardened crust,
From the long folded strata shake the dust;
Eons of ages mark the wondrous strife
Of matter struggling toward organic life;
The protozoic rocks their story tell,
That first formed creatures were a simple cell;
A vast connected chain the strata span,
Whose final links are riveted to man.
'T were vain to harmonize such facts as these
With old Theology's crude homilies.
Fossils of past ages these; behold the hour
When hydra-headed Superstition's power
By knowledge is o'erthrown, and shining truth,
Radiant with hues of everlasting youth,
Strides forth a conqueror, ruler of the world,
Bearing no mandates from Olympus hurled,
Nor fulminated thunder from the fount
Of Jewish revelation—Sinai's mount;
But truth, that springs from nature's living source,
In never-failing streams, that in their course
Unite to form a torrent, then a river,
That flows through time-worn channels on forever,

Meeting and mingling with that shoreless sea,
The boundless ocean of eternity.
And man shall know this truth, and he shall read
From nature's open book the only creed
That is divine, that doth embrace,
In its far-reaching kindness, every race;
Christian or pagan, every nation,
Shall find in natural law their sole salvation.
And thou great center soul and source
Of Life—fountain of creative force,
Parent of planets, thy transmuted power
Nourishes our earth from hour to hour.
From the transparent germ, the formless moat,
That in thy beams unconscious float,
To man himself, earth, air and sea,
Depend, material God, alone on thee.
Well might the Chaldean shepherd bow
Humbly before thee, even as now
Millions still worship thee as the one,
Vice-gerent of the Great Unknown.
One power, one force in ceaseless flow,
From this all springs, to this all go;
Transmuted energy, that we call life,
With all its happiness, and all its strife,
Is but the force the Sun God gives

To every protoplasmic form that lives.
The sum and substance of our final trust
Ends in a heap of elementary dust;
Shades of departed greatness long since passed,
Nirwana won, oblivion at last;
Eternal slumber guards your silent tomb,
But still ye live; the pregnant womb
Of future ages shall give birth
To knowledge that ye planted while on earth.
To be immortal, to outlive the shock
And wreck of decomposing atoms, and to mock
The forces that inaugurate destruction, change the
form,
When elements to elements conform;
To thirst for knowledge, to achieve the fame
That knowledge gives; a deathless name,
Girt with a halo that shall point the way
For struggling thousands toward a brighter day.
This is an immortality indeed,
That shall outlive the wreck of every creed;
This gives in life and death a recompense,
Based on our reason and our common sense.
Out of the elementary products of decay,
Almighty force will mould a different clay;
Thus from remodeled elements there springs

A thousand varied forms of living things;
But once disorganized, nor man, nor worm,
Has e'er regained a conscious form.
Mind force, nerve force, are but the same
Varied movements of life's flickering flame.
Upon organization all depends,
And this destroyed, the individual ends.
Each night annihilation proves itself in sleep;
When this is undisturbed and calm and deep,
All is blank nothingness, as if to show
From whence we come, to what we go.
Man needeth no delusive faith
With which to meet approaching death;
The last great change that comes to all
Is like the Autumn leaves that fall;
When the chilled sap no more supplies
The vital force, the leaflet dies.
We hold the terms of life from death,
And life exhales with every breath,
Is lost at last to mortal sight,
Absorbed within the Infinite.
But man should live to elevate his race;
Should stamp his structure with a lasting trace
Of something higher, purer, than he finds
In sordid men of low or common minds,

That dying, his bequest may be,
That which *should live* eternally.
E'en while I weave these scattered shreds of rhyme,
The roll of ages sounds the march of time;
The conqueror comes, and with majestic tread,
Strides o'er the living, tramples on the dead;
With one broad sweep, his sickle garners here
The ripened harvest of each closing year;
The sheaf that nations grew, a blow has cast
With one "fell swoop" into the mighty past.
Alas, the sands of life too quickly glide,
Washed by eternity's resistless tide,
And as Niagara's rushing torrents roll,
Swifter and swifter, as they near the goal;
So as our days melt into months and years,
Faster to us time's rapid flight appears;
The flying moments, as they hurry on,
Seem each to whisper: gone, forever gone.
Behold the morning cloud dissolve away,
Before the glory of advancing day;
So man returns to elements at last,
Lost in the azure of the fading past.

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